

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Empowerment Congress Summit to Feature L.A. Mayoral Candidates Forum**

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Empowerment Congress, the forerunner to Los Angeles' neighborhood council movement, will host a major mayoral candidates forum at 9 a.m. Saturday, January 19, at the University of Southern California's Bovard Auditorium.

True to its founding principal of civic engagement, the Empowerment Congress, a grassroots organization dedicated to teaching Los Angeles-area residents how to access and influence government, is marking its 21<sup>st</sup> summit by helping citizens make an informed decision when casting their ballots on March 5.

For the first time in its history, the Summit also will be live-streamed. Residents throughout Los Angeles and anywhere in the nation, who have an interest both in civic engagement and the city's mayoral race, will be able to watch the event in real time at: [ridley-thomas.lacounty.gov](http://ridley-thomas.lacounty.gov). In addition, the public is invited to submit questions for the candidates through the supervisor's website or, as they register for the event, at [empowermentcongress.org](http://empowermentcongress.org).

Participating will be: Los Angeles City Councilman Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jan Perry, Los Angeles City Controller Wendy Gruel, former Assistant United States Attorney Kevin James, and technology company executive Emanuel Pleitez.

Unique to the Empowerment Congress debate will be a focus on issues of particular importance to South Los Angeles and the African-American, Latino and Asian-American communities. Candidates also will discuss their plans for the future of Los Angeles as it relates to jobs, economic development, transportation and financial sustainability. A press availability will immediately follow the forum.

The morning plenary session will be followed by afternoon workshops on topics such as civic engagement, neighborhood councils, and coalition building.

The Empowerment Congress was born in the aftermath of injustice and violence: the beating of Rodney King, the acquittal of the Los Angeles police officers responsible and the wave of destruction that swept throughout Los Angeles. Under Ridley-Thomas' direction, a budding neighborhood improvement effort – initiated before the civil unrest -- was formalized into the Empowerment Congress, with the motto Educate, Engage, Empower.

The dynamic coalition of neighborhood groups, residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and community leaders now serves over 2 million residents in the Los Angeles County Second Supervisorial District, which reaches from Koreatown south to Carson, and Playa del Rey east to Compton.

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